



STATE REPRESENTATIVE **BETH MEYERS**

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Report to The 74th

As Legislative Session Begins, It's Politics as Usual in Madison

As I begin my term in the State Assembly, my constituents are telling me the same thing they told me during the campaign – they want both parties to work together to solve the real problems facing Wisconsin. After all, our state has a number of serious challenges: a \$2.2 billion structural deficit, job creation that lags behind most of the country, and a public education system still reeling from the biggest cuts in state history, to name a few. Though these issues are significant, they are nothing Wisconsinites can't handle if we put aside our differences and work together.

That's why I was so disappointed to see that, instead of working to move forward on any of these issues, the Majority Party chose to open the legislative session by pushing through another political power grab with their bill to strip Wisconsin's Supreme Court Chief Justice Shirley Abrahamson of her authority. In 1976, Shirley Abrahamson became Wisconsin's first female Supreme Court Justice. In 1996, as the Court's most senior member, she became Chief Justice, a position to which she has been re-elected twice. The constitutional amendment passed by the Legislature this week would strip her of that position by requiring the members of the Court to choose their own Chief Justice. The current selection system has been in place for over 100 years, and there is no public outcry or clear reason to change it now. Chief Justice Abrahamson is a widely respected, impartial public servant. Clearly, this proposal is motivated only by politics, as the Majority Party would prefer to have a Chief Justice who reliably votes as they prefer rather than one who impartially interprets the law.

Partisanship already has a stranglehold on our Legislature – now it threatens to take over the highest court in our state as well. It is especially inappropriate to push through this sweeping change on such a fast track. The public was only provided with one day's notice before the amendment's hearing and vote. Now it is up to Wisconsin citizens to accept or reject this constitutional amendment. Unfortunately, the proposal will go to ballot during the April election when about 20% of the electorate participates, instead of November when about 70% of eligible Wisconsinites cast their ballots; another deliberate attempt to minimize public oversight over this power grab.

Our Chief Constitutional Officer deserves better than this, as do the people of Wisconsin. I stand ready to work with members on both sides of the aisle to address the substantive issues facing our state – whenever the Republicans who control the Legislature are ready to set aside the political games, put people before party, and get to work.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, comments, or concerns regarding this or any issue of importance to you. I can be reached toll-free at: 1-888-534-0074 or via email at

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